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Sarah Withrow King, Animals Are Not Ours (No Really, They're Not): An Evangelical Animal Liberation Theology

Citation for published version:

Grumett, D 2017, 'Sarah Withrow King, Animals Are Not Ours (No Really, They're Not): An Evangelical Animal Liberation Theology', *Expository Times*, vol. 128, pp. 251-2.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524616680778j>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1177/0014524616680778j](https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524616680778j)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Expository Times

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TRADITION AND REFORM

Sarah Withrow King, *Animals Are Not Ours (No, Really, They're Not): An Evangelical Animal Liberation Theology* (Cambridge, Lutterworth, 2016. £15 pbk. pp. 192. ISBN: 978-0-7188-9448-1).

This is a bold book for an evangelical to write. Pushing the implications of a 'completely pro-life' stance all the way, Sarah Withrow King powerfully contests the endorsements of human dominion over animals that abound in her tradition. Promoting the reconciliation of creation in an 'already, but not yet' world, she challenges her readers to become 'agents of kingdom promises'. Drawing on John's gospel, King reasons that Christ did not become 'enmanned' but incarnate, living in solidarity with all flesh of whatever species. Humans are therefore called to care for creation, alleviating its suffering rather than exacerbating its groaning.

Having worked for the campaign group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, King knows a lot about how humans mistreat other animals. Some standard farming practices are ethically questionable, such as the shortening of natural lifespan and the separation from dairy cows of their calves within a day of birth. Each of these raises productivity but impairs individual or group flourishing. Nevertheless, King's analysis sometimes presents abuses as if they were the norm. Practices to which she refers that, in the UK, are illegal include the non-ventilation of broiler sheds, dragging fallen stock on a chain, failing to monitor the effectiveness of captive bolt stunning and the routine killing of piglets by a percussive blow to the head. Moreover, there is little recognition of the animal welfare improvements that are being achieved in many farming sectors. For example, in the UK over one third of broiler hens are now stunned not in electric waterbaths but in low atmospheric pressure modules, while in Germany this proportion is as high as 60%.

Lightly referenced and provocative in tone, this book will be better suited to church use than to formal theological study. For instance, King's conclusion to her critique of Descartes, who viewed animals as mere automata, is that she 'really wants to punch him in the face'. Nevertheless, ethical issues of great importance are raised and these need addressing by theologians too.

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